

Organics Subcommittee Meeting Summary

December 7, 2017, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA

All presentations are posted on the MassDEP website at

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/news/advisory-committees/swac-organics-subcommittee-.html>.

MassDEP Report on Food Waste Reduction and Capacity Growth – John Fischer, MassDEP

John Fischer of MassDEP provided a presentation on Massachusetts's progress with organics diversion and capacity development.

Q: Do the diversion figures include out of state food waste exports?

A: Generally no, although we have received at least one report from an out of state facility that we know accepts food material from Massachusetts.

Q: Are notices of non-compliance (NONs) effective at changing behavior?

A: Yes. When an organization receives a NON, a response is required on how to address it. We have seen generally good responses to NONs and a high degree of return to compliance so far. In some cases, higher level enforcement with a penalty may be needed, but MassDEP has found that NONs, or even letters, can be effective at improving compliance.

C: In Wellesley's experience with its five colleges, composting becomes more cost effective over time and the infrastructure continues to mature. As you get better at sorting out organics from your trash, you can adjust your trash collection contract. This leads to an increased organics capture rate along with cost savings. As infrastructure grows, haul distances become shorter, which also lowers collection costs.

Q: For anaerobic digestion facilities in development, to what degree do they have tonnage contracts with waste producers?

A: That depends on the volumes being generated and the preference of the generator. Most generally do not have contracts with waste producers. In some cases, anaerobic digestion facilities have had success building partnerships with haulers or other service providers to help establish reliable feedstock sources.

Q: In the future does MassDEP plan to make funding available to smaller community composting operations?

A: There is already funding available for composters through the Recycling Loan Fund and for those handling food waste through the Recycling Business Development Grant. MassDEP also provides grants to cities and towns through the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program. Additionally, food waste projects that have a clean energy component can apply for grants from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center.

Q: When a food waste waiver is issued for packaged food materials, does MassDEP follow up with that company to make sure they are diverting, for instance, to an AD facility that is ready to accept food waste?

A: Waivers may be issued either for one-time disposal needs or for an ongoing basis for a period of time, up to one year. Before issuing a waiver, MassDEP directs generators to facilities that accept packaged food materials for de-packaging. MassDEP will only issue a waiver if these facilities are not able to accept the material. MassDEP and RecyclingWorks do follow up with prior waiver recipients to help connect them with service providers whenever possible.

Initial Discussion of Solid Waste Master Plan Survey Responses and Priorities –John Fischer, MassDEP

John Fischer also provided an update on MassDEP's development of the 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan

Q: When will the 2016 solid waste data update be released?

A: MassDEP is currently finalizing the data for internal review. We expect to present the final draft data at the Solid Waste Advisory Committee meeting in January. That is an opportunity for external stakeholders to raise questions or comments on the data before MassDEP publishes the final Solid Waste Data Update.

ReFED Boston Food Waste Funders Initiative –Chris Cochran, ReFED

Chris Cochran, the Executive Director of ReFED, gave a presentation on ReFED's work with foundations and investors to increase

Q: Is there a state level tax incentive for food donations?

A: No

Q: What is the usual point of entry for engaging with funders?

A: This is different for different types of funders. Some focus specifically on food waste reduction, but often environmental funders are more interested in anaerobic digestion, composting, and animal operations. There are also philanthropic groups focused on fighting hunger, and they are more interested in food donations. There also may be opportunities to match foundation funds and private investment with existing state grant and loan programs.

Q: ReFED will be returning to the Boston area for a follow up meeting with food waste funders in March and then again as part of a Harvard Food Law Policy Clinic Conference in June. Are these meetings open for people to attend?

A: These are invitation-only meetings, so anyone interested in learning more about them should contact Chris Cochran at chris.cochran@refed.com.

Q: There are concerns over co-digestion of food materials with either sewage sludge or municipal solid waste. Has this come up as an issue in ReFED's discussions about anaerobic digestion?

A: This has not come up as an issue in ReFED's discussions, but could be considered as a topic in future discussions.

C: As the anaerobic digestion infrastructure continues to grow, it is important to consider how and where the digestate from these facilities is managed, as well as the energy and cost involved in managing this material.

A: On a macro level, markets for digestate are still developing. People in the industry recognize this bottleneck and are looking for solutions. Since phosphorous is a limiting nutrient, farms with digesters need to ensure that on-site application of digestate is consistent with the farm's existing nutrient management plan. In some cases, facilities may need to treat digestate to remove phosphorous, which can be a resource in some parts of the world.

Recycling Works in Massachusetts & Green Team FY17 Summary Report –Lorenzo Macaluso, CET

Lorenzo Macaluso of the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) gave a presentation on the fiscal year 2017 results of the RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts and Green Team programs, which CET manages under contract to MassDEP.

C: At the Bates school in Wellesley, 25% of the food waste was milk. Once this was realized, we diverted it from the trash to the drain. However, the question of how to stop wasting milk from opened cartons still exists.

C: One approach is to try a shared table concept. Unopened milk can be refrigerated and saved.

Q: Are there companies that collect and manage food waste on state contract?

A: Yes, there are multiple companies on state contract that will collect food waste from state facilities. In addition, RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts can provide technical assistance and equipment to help state facilities establish food waste collection programs.

Review and Discussion of Draft Food Waste Reduction BMPs –Josh Cook, Recycling Works in Massachusetts

C: The Wellesley Middle School uses batch cooking to help reduce wasted food.

Q: Regarding the EPA waste hierarchy, why is there such a big focus on composting when other things, like source reduction, are ranked higher on the list?

A: Composting is often a good way to start recognizing food waste, which can ultimately lead to reducing it. Once a business starts to see the food in the compost bin, they are more likely to implement steps to reduce or donate wasted foods. These different approaches are often synergistic rather than competing.

Q: How can health benefits be integrated into promoting food reduction?

A: We can add signage about eating smaller portions, which can have health benefits. Also, nutrition is a key aspect of food donations, and these organizations focus on donation of healthy, nutritious food.